

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 347

By Johnson

A RESOLUTION commemorating Vietnam Veterans Day and the fiftieth anniversary of the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Vietnam.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that this General Assembly should commemorate those solemn events in our nation's history that recognize the sacrifices made by our veterans on behalf of their fellow Americans; and

WHEREAS, March 29, 2023, marks the fiftieth anniversary of the withdrawal of the last United States combat troops from Vietnam and the final group of American prisoners of war being freed; and

WHEREAS, Tennessee has always treasured her veterans and their many contributions to our continued liberty, safety, and welfare, and thus it comes as no surprise that in 2008, the Volunteer State became the first state in the nation to pass legislation observing Vietnam Veterans Day; every year on March 29, we honor and recognize those who served during the Vietnam War; and

WHEREAS, the United States first became involved in Vietnam on November 1, 1955, when President Eisenhower committed military advisors to educate and train the Army of the Republic of Vietnam, actions that mark the official beginning of American involvement in the Vietnam War; and

WHEREAS, on January 12, 1962, United States Army pilots lifted more than 1,000 South Vietnamese service members over jungle and underbrush to capture a National Liberation Front stronghold near Saigon. Operation Chopper marked America's first combat mission against the Viet Cong and the beginning of one of our longest and most challenging wars; and

WHEREAS, through more than a decade of conflict that tested the fabric of our nation, the service of our men and women in uniform stood true. More than sixty years after that fateful

mission, we honor the Americans who served, pay tribute to those we have laid to rest, and reaffirm our dedication to showing a generation of veterans the respect and support of a grateful nation; and

WHEREAS, the Vietnam War is a story of service members of different backgrounds, colors, and creeds who came together to complete a daunting mission; it is a story of patriots who braved the line of fire, who cast themselves into harm's way to save a friend, and who fought hour after hour, day after day, to preserve the liberties we hold dear while upholding the highest traditions of our Armed Forces; and

WHEREAS, 9,087,000 personnel served from August 5, 1964, to May 7, 1975, and 2,709,918 served on the ground in Vietnam; two thirds of those who served were volunteers and not drafted, and 11,000 women served in Vietnam in various roles, including nursing, the Red Cross, and other military roles; and

WHEREAS, more than 2.5 million personnel served in the Republic of South Vietnam, including 1,736,000 in the Army, 391,000 in the Marines, 174,000 in the Navy and Coast Guard, and 293,000 in the Air Force; and

WHEREAS, as of 2020, there were approximately 6.3 million veterans of the United States military still alive who served during the period of the Vietnam War; of these veterans, 155,261 were from Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, 240 servicemembers have been awarded the Medal of Honor for their service in Vietnam; among those honored recipients from Tennessee are James Gardner of Dyersburg, Don Jenkins of Nashville, David Robert Ray of McMinnville, and Walter K. Singleton of Memphis; and

WHEREAS, eleven years of combat left their imprint on a generation; some 150,000 returned home bearing shrapnel and scars; 271,000 were burdened by the invisible wounds of post-traumatic stress, with 30 percent of all servicemembers experiencing some form of post-traumatic stress disorder in their lifetimes; 2.6 million were exposed to Agent Orange; and

58,479 laid down their lives in service to our nation. Now and forever, their names are etched into two faces of black granite, a lasting memorial to those who bore conflict's greatest cost; and

WHEREAS, the United States lists 2,500 Americans as prisoners of war or missing in action in Vietnam; of the 684 prisoners of war who returned home from Vietnam, the longest-held enlisted servicemember was Bill Robinson from East Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, 1,200 Americans are reported to have been killed-in-action with no body recovered, and approximately 1,584 Americans are still missing; Tennessee has recovered twenty-one servicemembers to date, while twenty-six Tennesseans are still recorded as missing-in-action; and

WHEREAS, half a century after the last of our troops left Vietnam on March 29, 1973, we pay tribute to the fallen, the missing, the wounded, the millions who served, and the millions more who awaited their return. Our nation stands stronger for their service, and on Vietnam Veterans Day, we honor their proud legacy with our deepest gratitude; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED THIRTEENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we hereby commemorate Vietnam Veterans Day in Tennessee and the fiftieth anniversary of the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Vietnam.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy and upon proper request made to the appropriate clerk, the language appearing immediately following the State seal appear without House or Senate designation.